



Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

7501st meeting

Friday, 7 August 2015, 10 a.m.
New York

<i>President:</i>	Mrs. Ogwu.	(Nigeria)
<i>Members:</i>	Angola.	Mr. Lucas
	Chad	Mr. Mangaral
	Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
	China.	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Jordan	Mrs. Kawar
	Lithuania	Ms. Murmokaite
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Méndez Graterol

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 25 February 2015 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2015/138)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 25 February 2015 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2015/138)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2015/602, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by France, Jordan, Lithuania, Malaysia, New Zealand, Spain, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/138, which contains a letter dated 25 February 2015 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, Chad, Chile, China, France, Jordan, Lithuania, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Spain, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2235 (2015).

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Ms. Power (United States of America): Today the Security Council has taken another step aimed at stopping the use of chemical weapons in Syria. That step is necessary because, despite our previous efforts

to stop the use of chemical weapons, the attacks have continued. Those efforts have included the Council's adoption in September 2013 of resolution 2118 (2013), which required the Syrian regime to dismantle and destroy its chemical weapons programme under international supervision. But while the resolution made significant progress towards that end, the attacks continued. Our efforts also included the adoption of resolution 2209 (2015), which condemned the use of chlorine as a chemical weapon and made clear that such attacks were a violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013).

Yet still the attacks continued. We know that those chemical attacks continued not only because of the testimonies of survivors and medical professionals, such as the harrowing account members of the Council heard in a closed meeting in April from Dr. Tennari, a physician from Sarmeen, who described his inability to resuscitate three siblings, ages one to three, following once such attack in March. We know not only because of the gruesome footage of those suffering from the effects of such attacks, including seizures, asphyxiation, foaming at the mouth — footage that we have all seen. We know for a fact because the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has carried out thorough and impartial investigations into alleged attacks and ultimately concluded that chemical weapons were used.

Let me read briefly from a report from one of those investigations lest we forget just how grotesque the effects of chemical weapons are. According to the OPCW's third fact-finding report (see S/2015/138), when the village of Talmenes was attacked on 21 April 2014, residents described seeing what they called a "honey wax-to-yellow coloured gas" (S/2015/138, enclosure IV, annex 2, para. 5.15) rise from the point of impact reaching above the minaret of the town's mosque up to 75 metres in the sky. Survivors next described a pungent irritating smell, like chlorine.

A seven-year-old boy, who lived approximately 15 metres from the place the bombs hit, died almost immediately. Residents told investigators that his body showed no signs of physical trauma but "turned blue in colour" (*ibid.*, para. 5.17). A teenage girl from the same house died days later, as did an elderly woman from a neighbouring home. Their bodies, like the boy's, showed no physical trauma. Olive, pomegranate and fig trees shed their fruit, and their leaves dried and shrivelled and turned yellow shortly after exposure. Younger

animals died immediately; fully grown animals a few hours later. Some 200 people rushed to a Talmenes field hospital with nearly identical symptoms — symptoms I would note that were just like the ones that Dr. Tennari described treating following the attack in Sarreen: a burning sensation in the eyes, face, throat and on their exposed skin, tearing, blurred vision, shortness of breath, a feeling of suffocation, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhoea, headache, generalized weakness, drowsiness, disorientation, and a loss of consciousness. This is what a chemical attack looks, smells and feels like.

Witness accounts, photographs and videos of the attacks and their victims, as well as other forms of evidence, led the OPCW to determine that there was

“compelling confirmation that a toxic chemical was used as a weapon, systematically and repeatedly, in the villages of Talmenes, Al Tamanah, and Kafr Zeta” (*ibid.*, enclosure III, annex 2, par.29)

between April and August 2014. The OPCW reported that 32 witnesses saw or heard the sound of helicopters over the three opposition-held towns right before the attacks occurred.

Until we adopted resolution 2235 (2015) today, there was no mechanism to take the obvious next step — determining who was involved in such attacks. Even when there were obvious signs pointing to the parties responsible, investigators were not empowered to point the finger. This has compounded an already rampant sense of impunity in Syria.

Pointing the finger matters. Let us imagine for a moment if we asked an investigative team to determine whether certain atrocities had occurred — such as rapes, tortures or executions — but did not ask that team to determine who was involved in such brutal acts. As we all know, that determination ties the perpetrator to the action, and that link is essential to eventual accountability and to helping prevent future abuses from occurring. That is what the new United Nations-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism will do in response to incidents in Syria that involved or likely involved the use of chemicals as weapons. The Mechanism will gather evidence aimed at identifying the individuals and entities that have a hand in such attacks, and it will do all it can to name those individuals or entities.

Now, we all know that we currently lack an effective mechanism for holding criminally accountable those responsible, but when the day comes that we have one — and that day will come — the evidence gathered by the Joint Investigative Mechanism will stand as a record not just of what has been done but of who has done it. Those who think that impunity will last forever for the perpetrators and all others involved in chemical-weapons attacks — those who order chemical attacks, those who fill munitions with chemicals, and those who drop chemical weapons — should look at all the perpetrators today who find themselves being forced to answer for acts committed years or even decades ago. They should look at those who have been convicted for carrying out the genocide and war crimes in the Balkans, or those now being prosecuted in The Hague. They should look at Hissène Habré, who is currently standing trial for atrocities he carried out in Chad three decades ago.

Let me conclude. Resolution 2235 (2015) was adopted today with the Council's unanimous support. This sends a clear and powerful message to all those involved in chemical-weapons attacks in Syria — the Joint Investigative Mechanism will identify you if you gas people. It bears repeating as well that we need to bring the same unity that we have shown today to urgently find a political solution to the Syrian crisis.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The effective implementation of the decisions of the Security Council and its resolution 2118 (2013), on the destruction of Syria's chemical arsenal — adopted at the initiative of Russia and the United States of America — is one of the Council's most significant successes and reaffirms the possibility of engaging in productive joint work on the most urgent problems of our time.

Against that backdrop, the Council could not ignore reports of the alleged use in Syria of toxic chemicals as chemical weapons. In the spring of 2014, under the auspices of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the Fact-Finding Mission in Syria began its work, which, with a great deal of certainty, confirmed the use of chlorine as a weapon in several populated areas of Syria. The Russian Federation decisively condemns such acts. We believe that they are unacceptable and run counter to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

At the same time, the question of who used chlorine remains unanswered, partly because the existing mechanisms of the United Nations and the OPCW are not mandated to identify those participating in such acts. Moreover, we have heard many politicized statements in that regard, which have clearly been meant as propaganda. It was necessary to close that gap, as was done with the adoption of resolution 2235 (2015) today, creating the preconditions for the launch of the Joint Investigative Mechanism of the United Nations and the OPCW.

We believe that today's decision is above all preventive, and lays the foundations for ending any use of toxic chemicals as weapons in Syria. We believe that the Mechanism will work impartially, objectively and professionally, as guaranteed by the successful experience of the Secretary-General and the OPCW Director-General in destroying Syria's chemical arsenal, as well as the successful cooperation of the United Nations and the OPCW in the framework of their joint mission, within which their responsibilities had been clearly delineated. We believe that this principle should guide the further work of the Joint Investigative Mechanism.

Taking into account the complex political and military situation in Syria, we believe that it will be extremely important for the Joint Investigative Mechanism to develop appropriate relationships within the country, without which the Mechanism will be unable to work in the field. We are convinced that Damascus, as it has done in the past — as repeatedly confirmed in the documents of the OPCW and the United Nations — will extend the necessary assistance to the Joint Investigative Mechanism and the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission to establish evidence of potential use of chlorine as a chemical weapon. We expect the opposition to adopt that approach.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize that any effort in the Syrian issue must be in line with the logic of assisting the search for a political solution to the conflict and should not further antagonize the parties. The priorities continue to include the fight against terrorism and in finding a political solution to the crisis in Syria.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes the Council's unanimous adoption of resolution 2235 (2015). China's position on chemical weapons is clear and consistent. We resolutely

oppose the use of chemical weapons by anyone in any circumstance. We express our concern over the use in Syria of chlorine gas as a weapon, as verified by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We support the objective, just and professional investigation of that incident and bringing the perpetrators to justice when there is hard evidence.

In that process, the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria must be respected and the OPCW and the United Nations should play their full roles in the investigation. China expects the Secretary-General soon to submit his report on the establishment of the Joint Investigative Mechanism, as called for in resolution 2235 (2015).

A political settlement is the only way to resolve the Syrian issue. At present, Special Envoy De Mistura is working tirelessly to advance a political settlement to the Syrian issue. The international community, and the Security Council in particular, should stay the course, never waver in striving for a political solution and unanimously support the United Nations role in that process, and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Special Envoy De Mistura in their good offices.

China hopes that resolution 2235 (2015), which was adopted by consensus, will help to further unanimity among Council members on the Syrian issue and give new impetus to the search for a comprehensive, enduring and appropriate settlement of the matter through political means at an early date. China shall continue to play a positive and constructive role to that end.

Mr. González de Linares Palou (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall be very brief and concise.

I wish to express my satisfaction and that of my country at the adoption today of resolution 2235 (2015), which was co-sponsored by Spain. In adopting the resolution by consensus, the Council has demonstrated that it is both serious and resolute. Of primary importance is our seriousness in insisting that there can be no impunity, particularly for those who commit grave violations of international law that can be considered to be war crimes or crimes against humanity; those who violate the most basic and sacred norms of international law and trust, and those who ignore the Security Council's resolutions, all of whom must be made accountable for their actions. Today the Security Council has lived up to its responsibilities. If we are to ensure our seriousness, we as a Council must

act consistently in the future. Today we have taken a first step in calling on the Secretary-General to begin work on setting up a Joint Investigative Mechanism, but once the Mechanism is under way, we must act on its recommendations and findings.

Secondly, today we have sent a message to the international community that we are determined to do everything possible to put an end to the worst conflict of the twenty-first century. The unity we have shown today must also be translated into other areas of the Syrian conflict, and today's success should push us to continue to work together to reach the only possible solution to it, which is a political one. I would therefore like to conclude by saying that we reiterate our firm support for the work being done by Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura.

Mr. Lamek (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the United States delegation for introducing today's resolution 2235 (2015), establishing a Mechanism to investigate the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

The adoption of the resolution is important for several reasons. First, it enables the Security Council to find some unity on Syria during a conflict, the worst since the twenty-first century began, that has lasted more than four years. The Council could not remain silent in the face of the fact that despite two resolutions (2118 (2013) and 2209 (2015)) condemning them, hideously cruel chemical attacks continued to occur repeatedly in Syria in 2014 and 2015. Several investigations by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in The Hague have confirmed cases of the use of chlorine gas in Syria, but without a mandate they could not identify the perpetrators of the attacks. But the investigations contained disturbing details about the systematic presence of helicopters during the attacks, and we know very well which party to the conflict is the only one with that kind of capacity. The Joint Investigative Mechanism we have set up today will enable us to authorize a neutral and independent body to establish who has been responsible for the chemical attacks in Syria in the past few years. It will work in close cooperation with the OPCW.

Our vote for this Investigative Mechanism is also important because it marks progress in the efforts to end impunity for attacks on the Syrian civilian population. We will be able to identify the perpetrators of these particularly grave crimes. Without that fear of justice,

the criminals in Syria who are using these inhumane weapons can rest easy in the certainty that they will not have to answer for their crimes. In April several doctors came to testify at an Arria Formula meeting of the Security Council. Their stories, and the images they showed at that time of children asphyxiated by chlorine, still haunt us. We all understood that we owed it to them and to those who gave us their testimonies to respond.

Finally, this vote is important because it sends a clear message of deterrence to all the parties to the Syrian conflict. These inhumane attacks must stop. The conflict has killed more than 230,000 people, most of them civilians. Beyond the chemical attacks, indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks on civilians have continued, such as those happening now in Zabadani, in violation of international humanitarian law and Council resolutions. It is crucial that we commit to ending the violence in Syria and resuming the dialogue and political process as soon as possible. In that regard, we are giving our full support to the ongoing efforts of the Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura. For all those reasons France sponsored today's resolution and voted in favour of it.

Mr. Méndez Graterol (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Venezuela voted in favour of resolution 2235 (2015) in the firm belief that the use of toxic substances as chemical weapons is a war crime and a crime against humanity that we categorically condemn wherever and however it occurs. My country is a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention and fully committed to its purposes and principles. My delegation wishes to emphasize the importance of fulfilment by the Syrian Government of its plan for eliminating chemical weapons on its territory and the cooperation of the Syrian authorities with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), as referred to in the OPCW's report on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013). We believe that those links between Syria and the two organizations will continue to be strengthened within a framework promoting international peace and security.

We hope that the Joint Investigative Mechanism of the United Nations and the OPCW, to be established pursuant to resolution 2235 (2015), will enable them to throw light on the allegations of the use of chlorine against the civilian population, with the goal of identifying the people and entities, whether groups or Governments, that have used or ordered the use of chemical substances as weapons in Syria. In fulfilling

its mandate, the Investigative Mechanism must respect the principles of impartiality, transparency and objectivity, in accordance with the terms agreed on by the Secretary-General with the OPCW, with the goal of achieving concrete results based on the investigation of the issue.

Venezuela reiterates that any solution to the armed conflict in Syria must be political, peaceful and negotiated. That is the only way to preserve peace and stability there with the full cooperation of the people of Syria and their Government. We must ensure respect for its sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence, as laid down in the Charter of the United Nations. Syria has been a victim of barbaric terrorists whose acts of violence are designed to impose their totalitarian ideologies and inciting hatred and religious intolerance. Venezuela firmly condemns such acts. It is well known that the use of chemical weapons can be traced to terrorist groups with foreign financing whose goal is to overturn the legitimate Government of President Bashar Al-Assad. If those terrorist organizations should succeed in imposing their totalitarian solutions, the consequences for the Syrian people and the Middle East would be even more devastating than what is currently going on in Libya. That is why the international community must support the Syrian Government and people in their fight against the terrorism afflicting this brother country.

In conclusion, the Security Council should support every effort aimed at promoting peace and stability in Syria and reconciliation for its people. In that regard, we support the diplomatic activities of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura. We believe his efforts will help to put the country on a path to peace.

Mrs. Kavar (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Two years ago, the international consensus enabled us to respond quickly and effectively to the reports of the use of chemical weapons in the conflict in Syria, whose shocking images have remained with us, images of Syrian civilian victims of chemical weapon attacks in the Guta area of Damascus. International diplomatic efforts resulted in a historic decision taken by the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on dismantling the Syrian chemical weapons programme and endorsed by the Security Council through its adoption of resolution 2118 (2013). The unity, particularly in its objective, demonstrated by the Council, aimed at making concrete

progress regarding the issue of Syria's chemical weapons, helped to ensure the resolution's adoption.

However, despite our adoption of resolution 2209 (2015) today, we are seeing new and extremely disturbing reports of the use of chlorine gas as a chemical weapon in Syria, undermining the progress that has been made by flagrantly ignoring the views of the international community as a whole and all our human values. There is a need to address this issue in the context of cooperation with the OPCW in a precise and effective manner. Silence would only distance us further from the international community's goal of ending such crimes.

Jordan voted in favour of resolution 2235 (2015) on the basis of its firm condemnation of the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The use of toxic chemicals, such as chlorine gas, contravenes the Chemical Weapons Convention, international humanitarian law and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. Jordan wants the United Nations to remain seized of this question, in line with the Security Council's Charter mandate and its own resolutions.

It will therefore be necessary to follow the work of the Joint Investigative Mechanism as closely as possible so as to ensure that it addresses all occurrences of the use of chemical weapons. We must all cooperate with the Mechanism and impose the relevant measures. A failure to implement the provisions of resolution 2118 (2013) would require long-term follow-up to ensure that such acts do not recur. Those who have used such weapons must be brought to justice and held accountable for their actions.

In conclusion, the adoption of resolution 2235 (2015) is intended to end the use of chemical weapons in Syria, but our brothers and sisters there continue to suffer horrifically every day. We therefore hope that henceforth the consensus reached on this dossier will enable us to move forward and progress in the United Nations efforts to find a political solution to the Syrian crisis, based on the first Geneva conference, so as to fulfil the hopes of the brotherly people of Syria that they will find a role to play in a new era, that stability can be restored and the social fabric repaired, and that the refugees can return voluntarily to their country.

Ms. Murmokaitė (Lithuania): Lithuania co-sponsored and voted in favour of resolution 2235 (2015), establishing the Joint Investigative Mechanism

to identify those involved in the use of chemicals as weapons in Syria.

Despite the fact that the complete prohibition of the use of chemical weapons is at the core of the Chemical Weapons Convention, to which Syria has been a State party since October 2013, and the prohibitions contained in the resolutions 2118 (2013) and 2209 (2015) to use, develop, retain or transfer chemical weapons in Syria, the use of toxic chemicals has continued with disturbing frequency. Civilians remain the primary targets of such attacks, while spreading fear remains their main objective.

When in August 2013 hundreds died in Ghouta after the Syrian regime used sarin against its own people, a formidable effort was launched by the international community to destroy the regime's declared stockpiles of chemical weapons. For some time, there was hope that Ghouta would be the last time we would ever see chemical weapons use in Syria or anywhere else for that matter. But after Ghouta came Talmenes, Al Tamanah, Kafr Zita, Idlib and others — more helicopters overhead, the whistling sound of falling barrels, and orange plumes of noxious chlorine gas rising above civilian neighbourhoods.

The attacks did not stop either after the conclusion was reached by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Fact-Finding Mission in September 2014 that a toxic chemical was used as a weapon, systematically and repeatedly, in the villages of northern Syria, or when the Council — barely five months ago — adopted a second resolution on the subject, in which it stressed that those responsible for any use of chemicals as weapons must be held accountable and reiterated its readiness to impose measures under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations in the event of non-compliance.

The resolution we have just adopted is about accountability. The Joint Investigative Mechanism that is to be established will provide a clear path to identifying those responsible for attacks involving chemical weapons in Syria, whoever they are. That is a crucial step forward, since it will enable us to drag the perpetrators out of the shadow of their ugly deeds, put a face on those criminals and thereby send a clear message to other would-be perpetrators that the international community will no longer tolerate such crimes.

The Council must take all the steps necessary to make sure that those responsible for the chemical attacks are brought to justice. Accountability, however, should not be limited only to those responsible for chemical weapons attacks, but extend to all those who have caused death, destruction and unimaginable suffering to the Syrian people during the conflict that started some four and a half years ago. The Council must stand firm for accountability. We owe it to the memory of the hundreds of thousands who have lost their lives and to the millions left destitute and displaced by the carnage in Syria.

Mr. Wilson (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom is pleased to have co-sponsored resolution 2235 (2015). We strongly support the establishment of a Joint Investigative Mechanism into alleged uses of toxic chemicals as weapons in Syria. This Mechanism is a vital step forwards. Through our actions today, we have moved closer to ending impunity and to holding to account those who have used these barbaric weapons.

The Mechanism we have established today will be impartial, it will be independent and it will be comprehensive. It builds logically on past investigations. It has a clear mandate to identify individuals, entities, groups or Governments that are perpetrators, organizers or sponsors of the use of chemicals as weapons in Syria. This includes chlorine and any other toxic chemical.

Launching this impartial Mechanism shows our commitment to a rules-based international system where the hard facts will identify those responsible for these crimes. This is an important step forward, but there is more to do. We look forward to the Mechanism starting its work promptly, and we reiterate the Council's call on all States to cooperate fully with United Nations investigators, as well as with the Fact-Finding Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. They will play a key facilitating role in the work of the Joint Investigative Mechanism.

In establishing the Mechanism today, we have demonstrated that the Council can find common ground; we look forward to building on this in order to tackle the other challenges we face on Syria, and to bring an end after so long to the suffering of the Syrian people.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): New Zealand was pleased to support and co-sponsor resolution 2235 (2015), which we have just adopted.

Chemical weapons are an appalling weapon. The international community showed its revulsion of these weapons and its determination to stamp them out in the negotiation and adoption of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The adoption of resolution 2118 (2013) was a highly important step by the Council in responding to reports confirming the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The Syrian regime's acceptance of that resolution and its decision, albeit belated, to join the Chemical Weapons Convention and to cooperate in the destruction of its chemical-weapons stocks were welcome. A major international effort led by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has been under way to remove and destroy those weapons.

Yet, reports have continued to come out of Syria that chemical weapons continue to be used. This is monstrous, even in the context of that thoroughly horrible conflict. Accordingly, it is right and proper that the Council has now adopted a Mechanism to enable the identification of those responsible and to hold them to account. Those who use or authorize the use of such weapons must be held to account for their dreadful deeds. We welcome agreement on the text of resolution 2235 (2015) as an all-too-rare example of collective Council action on the Syrian conflict. We hope that the spirit of cooperation that underlies the resolution will embue the Council's efforts to address and resolve the wider Syrian conflict.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Nigeria.

Nigeria notes that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Fact-Finding Mission mandated to establish the facts surrounding the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria has concluded "with a high degree of confidence" (S/2015/138, annex 2, para. 29) that toxic materials have been used as a weapon in Syria. We also note that the Fact-Finding Mission does not have the mandate to attribute responsibility for those actions, which constitute a gross violation of international law. That lack of attribution has left a gap that must be filled in order to determine those behind the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Resolution 2235 (2015), which the Security Council has just adopted unanimously, seeks to fill that gap through an OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism. That is why Nigeria voted in favour of its adoption.

We deem it necessary to affirm that, while we support the establishment of a Joint Investigative Mechanism,

we have neither preconceptions nor prejudices concerning who is behind the chemical weapons attacks in Syria. We are confident that those facts can be established by the Joint Investigative Mechanism. Our wish is to see to it that the perpetrators are brought to justice. We call on all parties in Syria — and, indeed, on the international community — to cooperate with the Joint Investigative Mechanism in the execution of its mandate. We reaffirm our strong condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by anyone under any circumstances.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Today marks 70 years since the United States Army used a nuclear weapon against Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Seventy years ago, humankind discovered the scope and the horror of that destructive weapon. Since that time, Governments have taken pains to come to terms with it, adopting the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 1968. My country became a signatory to the Treaty that very year. That was followed by the discovery of a new type of weapon — biological weapons. Governments once again worked hard, adopting the Biological Weapons Convention in 1975 to ban such weapons. My country has adhered to that Convention. Then came chemical weapons, and Governments exerted themselves for a third time to adopt the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1993. My country adhered to it recently. The Syrian Government has not used any such weapons — nuclear, biological or chemical.

When we served as a member of the Security Council in 2003, my country's commitment was evidenced by our submission to the Council and to Member States of a draft resolution to make the Middle East a zone free of all types of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. Unfortunately, our draft resolution was objected to by a Council member, an influential country, with the aim of protecting Israeli nuclear weapons.

In my statement today, my aim is to paint a complete picture of the situation, not a partial one. We have many times drawn the Council's attention to, and warned it of, the danger of the use of chemical weapons in Syria by terrorist groups, some of which are affiliated with Al-Qaida. We have expressed our

grave fear that certain regimes that support terrorism and terrorists may provide chemical weapons to armed terrorist groups, and then pretend that it was the Syrian Government that had used such weapons. In that regard, I recall the Syrian Government's initiative in asking the Secretariat to conduct an inquiry into the attack on Khan Al-Asal village near Aleppo. Unfortunately, that inquiry has yet to be conducted, in spite of the Syrian Government's agreement to send Mr. Sellström to carry out an investigation on the specific incident that took place two years ago. After two years, still no inquiry has been carried out on the events in Khan Al-Asal. The perpetrators of that horrific crime remain unknown and have so far escaped any form of accountability. I also recall that dozens of official letters sent by the Syrian Government to the Security Council, its committees and to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) included tangible proof of the use of chemicals. On 5 August, we provided a file containing all 13 official letters, which can be found in the United Nations archives and with delegations.

Syria has upheld its commitments flowing from its adherence to the Chemical Weapons Convention as well as to those under resolution 2118 (2013). From the very beginning up to today, Syria has consistently cooperated and positively, transparently and flexibly meet its commitments, in spite of the terrible challenges posed by an extremely complex, difficult and even provocative security situation — the result of the bellicose positions taken by certain regional and international parties. Without Syria's constructive cooperation with the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission, its work would not have been successful. Ms. Sigrid Kaag has herself attested to that. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has repeatedly reiterated to the Security Council and to the OPCW Executive Council its condemnation of the use of chemical weapons and weapons of mass destruction by anyone anywhere. In that regard, I reiterate once again that the Syrian Government and the Syrian army have never used chemical weapons, and never will.

Contrariwise, Syria's army and its civilians have been targeted with toxic chemicals and chemical weapons, including chlorine gas, by armed terrorist groups, such as Daesh and the Al-Nusra Front, in many parts of Syria, as part of their criminal and terrorist acts in our country and the region.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reiterates that neutrality, transparency, credibility and integrity, while refraining from politicization, as

well as cooperation and coordination with the Syrian Government, must be the guiding principles for the Joint Investigative Mechanism established pursuant to resolution 2235 (2015), which the Council just adopted. We say that based on our experience with previous missions, which flouted all those principles in their practices, and in particular because they based their work on false, fabricated statements made by parties well known to all. Those missions have carried out partial and biased investigations — outside Syria — without a modicum of coordination with the Syrian authorities.

For example, various Council members have spoken of helicopters. That is a very important point that is a typical example of the fabrication included in various documents of witnesses purporting to have heard helicopters — in Turkey, not over Syrian territory. That makes such statements questionable, for reasons known to all. In addition, two years ago in the Council we showed a film, taken in Turkish territory, in which rabbits were used as test subjects for chemical weapons. According to one of the people in the film, the terrorists claimed to have carried out those tests in order to enable them to use chemical weapons in Syria. Unfortunately, that is precisely what happened.

The facts show that the Syrian Government has upheld all of its commitments under all of the resolutions adopted by the Council — be it with regard to chemical weapons, the humanitarian situation or combating terrorism. At the same time, however, certain States — in the region and beyond, and including some mentioned by name in various reports, including reports of Council committees — are inflaming the situation and attracting foreign terrorist fighters to Syria from more than 100 countries. Those parties have not implemented any of the Council's resolutions.

We in Syria we are suffering from those parties' violations, in an unprecedented context of political blackmail that is prolonging the people's suffering and exacerbating the crisis. In the context of the adoption of today's resolution, we reiterate our appeal to the Security Council to call on all Member States to fully implement the provisions of all the Council's resolutions, in particular resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014) and 2199 (2015). We ask the Council and the Joint Investigative Mechanism it has just created to cooperate and coordinate its actions with the Syrian Government in order to ensure accountability and transparency.

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.